

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

project flash

Alaska Partnership Receives \$750,000 for Wetlands Project

On September 8, 2004, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, as authorized under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, approved **\$750,000** in funding for the **Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Phase III Project** in **Alaska**. The Act is nonregulatory and calls for voluntary partnerships to develop and implement wetlands and associated uplands projects to benefit wildlife. Projects must meet certain biological criteria to be considered for funding, and partners must be able to match the grant request 1:1 with nonfederal funds.

Under phase I and II, 63,394 acres of refuge inholdings, containing wetlands and associated uplands, were acquired and donated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for inclusion in the refuge complex. In phase III, partners will purchase an additional 6,600 acres of inholdings to add to the refuge. Some 11,445 acres of previously acquired acreage are being used as match.

Izembek provides essential stopover habitat for birds migrating between wintering areas in Latin America and the Lower 48 and Arctic breeding grounds. Most, if not all, of the world population of Pacific brant arrive at the refuge each fall, with 10 to 15 percent of the population overwintering. The entire world population of emperor geese gathers here during spring and fall, with more than 20 percent overwintering. Fourteen species of seaducks use the refuge at various times of the year, some for breeding, all for wintering. The refuge habitats also are extremely important to 24 shorebird species. Spectacular concentrations of shorebirds stop at Izembek in spring and fall, and eight shorebird species remain at the refuge for breeding. The refuge has been designated a Wetlands of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention and a Reserve of International Importance by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

The lands acquired under this project will remain open to the public for birding, hiking, and hunting. Project partners include The Conservation Fund and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. Partners' contributions to the project amounted to **\$1,545,625**. Their efforts also support the conservation goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Pacific Coast Joint Venture** and the Southwest Alaska Conservation Coalition.

For more information about this project, contact Brad Meiklejohn, Alaska Representative, The Conservation Fund, (907) 694-9060, bradmeiklejohn@aol.com, or David Buie, Standard Grants Program Proposal Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (301) 497-5870, david_buie@fws.gov.

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